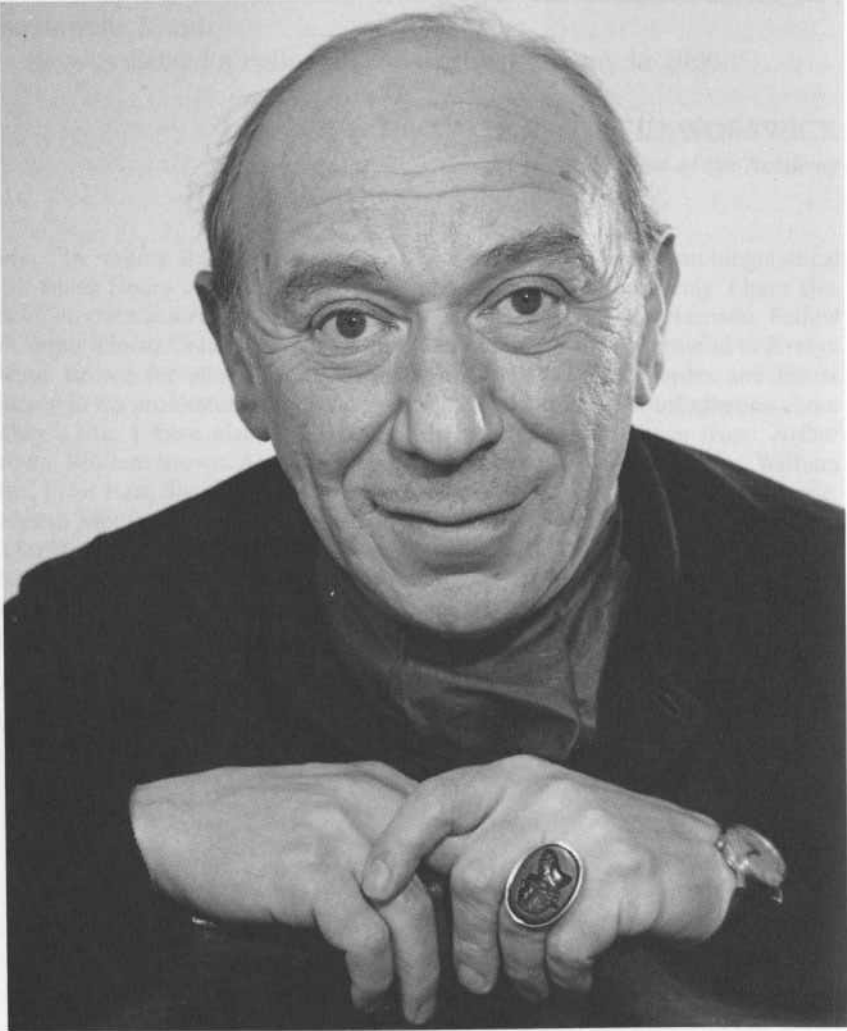


to conclude that that was as far as he was going to get. His mental faculties were unimpaired, but he found reading and, gradually, further writing dropped out of the picture. He retained a lively interest in current economic affairs. Once he had resolved that he would not embark on a new project, which would have the first call on his energies, he was able to return, with further enthusiasm to the World Bank.



SAMUEL FINER

Samuel Edward Finer 1915–1993

SAMUEL EDWARD FINER was one of the pioneers of post-war British political science. Until the 1950s, only a handful of universities in Britain could boast an undergraduate degree in Politics—Oxford, LSE and Manchester, for example—though a number of university colleges catered for the London External B.Sc. (Econ.) degree. In many universities, one or two academics, located in departments of History, Economics, or Philosophy, taught particular papers. The scope of the subject was similarly narrow. Political thought, of course; public administration (with special emphasis on local government), and some teaching of the government of major foreign countries—the United States, France, the Soviet Union—these were the ingredients of the subject as understood in the early post-war era. International relations, which logically seems to belong to the same family as political science, was carving out its own largely independent status.

In 1950, Finer, then a research fellow of Balliol, was appointed to a Chair at the new University College of North Staffordshire at Keele. The College, pioneered by Lord Lindsay, the former Master of Balliol, was intended to be a centre of innovation in British universities. Keele's most distinctive feature was the Foundation Year, the first-year course which all students had to take and pass before proceeding to their two principal subjects. The Foundation Year sought to correct excessive specialisation, by offering to students a course which introduced them to an overview of human knowledge. From Plato to NATO, was how it became popularly known.

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Perhaps the most novel feature of Keele, however, in the early years of the College, was Finer himself, universally known as Sammy. He was prodigiously erudite; he could draw effortlessly on a vast fund of knowledge (not all of which was accurate). His knowledge was matched by his capacity for talk. There was nothing like an audience to turn him on. He was the ultimate anti-solipsist. The worst sentence that could ever have been imposed on Finer would have been solitary confinement. He was a social animal.

Finer's parents came to Britain from Romania in 1900, two representatives of the Jewish diaspora of that decade, and settled as market traders in London's East End.¹ Tragically, they both died by enemy action early in 1945. His brother Herman, 18 years older, became a noted political scientist, and provided him with a role model; Sammy's declared ambition was 'to be like my brother'. Herman's *Theory and Practice of Modern Government*,² first published in 1932, anticipated his younger brother's greatest contributions to the subject, for it broke with the dominant country-by-country approach, an approach that had prevailed more through inertia than for any better cause. Sammy went to Holloway School in London. His parents had hopes of his going into medicine but Herman persuaded his parents to let him follow Arts subjects in the sixth form.

Sammy won an Open Scholarship to Trinity College, Oxford, and got a First in PPE in 1937. He then read for the degree in Modern History and in 1938 obtained another First. He then spent two years as Senior George Webb Medley scholar, before joining the Royal Corps of Signals, in which he became a captain. He was stationed for a while at Catterick (an experience which perversely left him with a lasting dislike of the Yorkshire Dales), and served much of his time in the Middle East.

Demobilised in 1946, he returned to Oxford, spending four years

¹ For the biographic detail, especially of Professor Finer's early life, I have drawn heavily on Dennis Kavanagh's chapter *The Fusion of History and Politics: The Case of S. E. Finer* in H. Daalder, *The Autobiography of Comparative European Politics* (London, 1996) and on his chapter in the Festschrift of which he and Gillian Peele were joint editors, D. Kavanagh and G. Peele (eds.), *Comparative Government and Politics: Essays in Honour of S. E. Finer* (London and Boulder, Colo., 1984).

² H. Finer, *Theory and Practice of Modern Government* (New York, 1932).

there first as Lecturer in Politics at Balliol, and for his last year serving as Junior Research Fellow. In 1950, Lord Lindsay took up his appointment as first Principal of the new University College of North Staffordshire at Keele. Finer, who had already published his *Primer of Public Administration*³ was appointed to the Chair of Local Government and Administration. Soon after the appointment Lindsay suggested that the title of the Chair be changed to Political Institutions (there was a separate Chair of Moral and Political Philosophy). And so it was: the world, after all, was Finer's parish.

Finer spent sixteen years at Keele, building up, before the great university expansion of the 1960s, what, apart from the triad of Oxford, Manchester and LSE, was one of the strongest Politics departments in the country, and establishing a reputation as one of the country's leading political scientists. By 1966, he had completed his work at Keele, and he moved to Manchester as Professor of Government, where his most notable book was *Comparative Government*.⁴ In 1974, Max Beloff left Oxford, to take up an appointment as Principal of the new University College at Buckingham, leaving vacant the Gladstone Chair of Government and Public Administration. Finer was appointed to this Chair, and spent the last eight years of his formal working life in that post. His thoughts began to turn to his magisterial *History of Government from the Earliest Times*;⁵ this, a book imaginative in conception and monumental in scope, was to be the chief labour of his retirement. His last years were marred by illness but he had almost completed the manuscript when he died in June 1993.

Finer was twice married: first to Ann McFadyean, and secondly to Catherine Jones. There were three children of the first marriage—Jeremy, Jessica, and Joshua.

Sammy's overpowering need to communicate was satisfied by his three roles: as teacher, as scholar, as intellectual entrepreneur. He was a charismatic lecturer for whom exposition was a two-way process. He both excited and entertained his listeners; in turn, the obvious appreciation of his hearers stimulated him. The bigger the crowd, the better. Nor

³ S. E. Finer, *A Primer of Public Administration* (London, 1950).

⁴ S. E. Finer, *Comparative Government* (Harmondsworth, 1970).

⁵ S. E. Finer, *History of Government from the Earliest Times* (Oxford, forthcoming).

was he selective about his audience; a man without side, he seemed wholly free of any hint of academic snobbery. After a day of formal teaching, he would address his sometimes bemused hearers at the bar of the 'Sneyd Arms' in Keele village. Politics, given its subject-matter, might dispute with Economics the title of 'the dismal science', but not with Finer around. He taught undergraduates that learning could be fun; his lectures were informed by immense knowledge, enlivened by epigram (mostly, perhaps wholly, original) and enriched by paradox.

Finer, however, was much more than a brilliant teacher. His research output was large; but, more important, much of it was innovatory. It was varied in content and often imaginative in approach. He brought pace and novelty to what, in the 1950s, was the staid world of British political science. He opened up what, for the British profession, were virgin territories.

Finer's research divides naturally into four areas, to which all but a scatter of his publications belong. His three earliest books were his *Primer of Public Administration*³ ('my little primer' as he was wont to call it), *Local Government in England and Wales*⁶ and his *Life and Times of Sir Edwin Chadwick*.⁷ These form a natural grouping, however anomalous it might seem to include his major biography of *Chadwick* with an introduction such as the *Primer*. The justification of bracketing them together lies in an undoubted commonality of matter. Both the *Primer* and *Local Government in England and Wales* are concerned with the principles of administrative structure, with such issues as the relationship between areas and functions in the administration of public services, with the role of officials and the central departments. The affinity of these two books with *Chadwick* is discussed below.

In the *Primer* Finer displays two gifts which are a feature of nearly all his work: the capacity to simplify without sacrificing scholarly integrity and the ability to enliven what might seem prosaic detail. Public administration had a reputation amongst students, partly deserved, for dullness and formalism. Indeed, the character of the literature, and the teaching of the subject, may partly have reflected the vocational needs of some of its clientele. What stands out about the

⁶ J. Maud and S. E. Finer, *Local Government in England and Wales*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1953).

⁷ S. E. Finer, *The Life and Times of Sir Edwin Chadwick* (London, 1952).

Primer, his first book and intended as a simple introductory text, is the intellectual context in which he explains the mundane chores of public administration, and the vivid way in which he brings the subject to life. 'Over the whole report,' he writes referring to the findings of a Committee of Enquiry into the Anti-Tuberculosis Service in Wales, 'broods the stench of the sickbed, squalor, dirt, dungheaps and lingering death. The problem of areas,' he went on 'is an exercise in human miseries.'⁸

Local Government in England and Wales, published under the joint names of Finer and Sir John Maud, is a revision and updating of a book written by Maud twenty years before. It seems that the revised book was largely Finer's work.⁹ *Sir Edwin Chadwick* was his earliest monograph; it is a major work of scholarship. It properly belongs with the *Primer*, and the book on local government, because of the profound way in which Chadwick helped to shape the later pattern of local government, the tensions between the centralisers and the advocates of local autonomy portrayed in the book, and the way in which perennial questions of public administration are brought into relief throughout Chadwick's career. Over and above these concerns it is an outstanding biography, and a significant contribution to English social history. It bears the stamp of years of archival research and through the life of a nineteenth-century figure, illuminates many of the problems of twentieth-century administration.

Finer had a restless mind and was soon seeking new realms. Interest in pressure groups was just beginning in British political science, stimulated partly by the American political scientist, Samuel Beer, who published two ground-breaking articles in 1956 and 1957.¹⁰ Finer, envisaging a major research monograph, had already started work on the transport lobby in Britain. In 1956, he gave a characteristically provocative talk on BBC radio, 'In Defence of Pressure Groups',¹¹ a talk which might best be described as an academic manifesto. For some reason, the transport book was never completed but in 1958, he pub-

⁸ Finer, *Primer*, p. 95.

⁹ Maud and Finer, *Local Government*, p. v.

¹⁰ S. Beer, 'Pressure Groups and Parties in Britain', *American Political Science Review*, March 1956, and 'The Representation of Interests in British Government', *American Political Science Review*, September 1957.

¹¹ S. E. Finer, 'In Defence of Pressure Groups', *Listener*, 7 June 1956.

lished *Anonymous Empire*,¹² this was not a book resting on detailed study but rather sought to construct a framework for understanding pressure groups, or ‘the lobby’ to use Finer’s term. The book sought to tell us in propositional form ‘What is the Lobby’, ‘Who are the Lobby’ ‘What the Lobby does’ and concluded with an appraisal of the significance of the lobby for democratic government. As in his BBC talk, he emphasised the positive features of the lobby as a link between citizens and government but voiced anxiety about the secrecy which often veiled relations between interest groups and the state. ‘Light! *more* light!’, was his call.¹³

Anonymous Empire illustrates one of Finer’s most prominent strengths. The empirical content of the book was slight, and he freely acknowledged that newspapers, as well as *Hansard*, the reports of organisations, and official publications were a major source.¹⁴ Its research claims did not lie in the empirical material the book presented; the book was important because it was a trail-blazer. It offered to an inward-looking, traditional and parochial national profession a new approach and new intellectual territory. We so take for granted the study of pressure groups today, that we have lost sight of the challenge which such a book presented. It set out an agenda for the study of the topic.

Finer’s articles in this field include ‘The Federation of British Industries’¹⁵ (the predecessor of the CBI) and, published the year before, ‘The Political Power of Private Capital’.¹⁶ Much of his best work reflected his enthusiasm; but there was also a strong sceptical streak to which he gave full scope. ‘The Political Power of Private Capital’ was essentially a debunking work, calling into question some of the most hallowed intellectual shibboleths of the Left. He did not deny that capital could use a variety of tactics and deploy an assortment of sanctions; the mistake of the Left was to argue that private capital would use all of these, at virtually the same time, and in the same country. ‘What may or can conceivably happen is not the same as something likely to happen.’¹⁷

Finer’s work on central institutions in Britain partly overlapped with

¹² S. E. Finer, *Anonymous Empire* (London, 1958).

¹³ *Ibid.* p. 133.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. viii.

¹⁵ S. E. Finer, ‘The Federation of British Industries’, *Political Studies*, March 1956.

¹⁶ S. E. Finer, ‘The Political Power of Private Capital’, *Sociological Review*, September 1955.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 287.

his pressure groups phase. Like 'The Political Power of Private Capital', 'The Individual Responsibility of Ministers'¹⁸ was a debunking exercise, this time directed not at the illusions of the Left but at the mythologies of the British Establishment. Every student of British government at the time knew that ministers were individually responsible to the House of Commons for the actions of their departments. The same students were assured that, by convention, the sanction of loss of office ensured that ministers kept firm control of their Civil Servants. Ministers whose departments blundered, or abused their powers, were expected to resign. The doctrine had already been dented, and in large measure redefined, in the wake of the Crichton Down scandal, revealed in 1954. Finer's article, published in 1956, examined all the grosser examples of departmental mismanagement, error and abuse in the past hundred years and looked at the fate of the Ministers 'responsible', concluding that relatively few Ministers in this position had actually resigned and that the operation of the sanction depended essentially on party political factors. 'It is on some sixteen or at most nineteen penitents and on one anomaly that the generalisation has been based.'¹⁹

Finer's next project proved to be much more controversial. Whilst transport was still unfinished his unquenchable exuberance led him into new paths. Finer had observed the way in which American scholars had exploited the greater freedom of voting in Congress to relate the ideologies of Senators and Representatives to such variables as region, the degree of agricultural employment, the percentage of foreign-born, as well as to identify the different blocs in Congress. In Britain, the rigidity of party discipline, then even stronger than it is today, concealed divisions of opinion amongst Members of the same party. One day it occurred to him that back-bench motions, put down by private Members, and often signed by considerable numbers of back-benchers, gave a simple way of identifying the attitudes of MPs. Thus was born *Backbench Opinion in the House of Commons 1955-59*,²⁰ published in 1961. It evoked furious and sometimes derisive strictures from politicians, journalists, and some academics. The present writer was a co-author of the book and sole author of the next volume and might therefore be regarded as a biased observer; some readers might

¹⁸ S. E. Finer, 'The Individual Responsibility of Ministers', *Public Administration*, Winter 1956.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 394.

²⁰ S. E. Finer, H. B. Berrington and D. J. Bartholomew, *Backbench Opinion in the House of Commons 1955-1959* (Oxford, 1961).

therefore wish to discount his comments. What the reaction seemed to show was the unadventurous parochialism of British political science, and the primitive methodology of the non-academic critics. They had failed to absorb the injunction of Graham Wallas, made over half a century before, that, in addressing political problems, we must learn to think quantitatively.²¹

Although Finer's attention broadened in the early 1960s to embrace the political role of the military, and to comparative government, he sustained his interest in British politics and government. Like many British political scientists, he saw in the British polity a model of how governments could combine strength with democratic responsiveness. The enactment of the Labour Party's manifesto commitments in 1945 seemed to many to provide a graphic example of the way the British system could translate the popular will into a programme of far-reaching economic and social reforms. The 1960s and early 1970s saw gradual disillusionment. In February 1974 Harold Wilson became Prime Minister once again, this time as head of a minority government. Indeed, the result in that election was striking in that no two parties in combination (except Labour and the Conservatives) could muster a majority in the new House. To those who regarded the British parliamentary system with uncritical admiration, such a condition seemed a recipe for at best stalemate, at worst, disaster. Not so Finer: before the next election, called to give the government a majority, had been held, he had recanted a lifetime's belief with an article in *New Society*, 'In Defence of Deadlock',²² a strident attack on what he dubbed 'adversary politics'.

A year later, Finer edited a new volume, *Adversary Politics and Electoral Reform*.²³ The book presented a series of chapters looking at the costs of the adversary regime, the working of the electoral system, and the experience continental countries had had with proportional representation and coalition government. The traditional defence of the British system had been that it provided strong government. The increasingly visible signs that British governments, despite their vast formal powers, were strong only in the division-lobbies at Westminster, but in the real world, cabined, cribbed and confined by pressure groups on the one hand and the electorate on the other, provoked some scholars

²¹ G. Wallas, *Human Nature in Politics* (London, 1908).

²² S. E. Finer, 'The Present Discontents: In Defence of Deadlock', *New Society*, 5 September 1974.

²³ S. E. Finer (ed.), *Adversary Politics and Electoral Reform* (London, 1975).

to make a fundamental reassessment. Finer returned to these themes during the next few years. *The British Party System 1945–79*²⁴ suffered in that, being one of a series of studies of national party systems, it had to conform to a strait-jacket imposed by the series' editors. Nevertheless, the book mounts a robust attack on the party system, and the 'first past the post' electoral formula which sustains it. His conclusion recalls the 'Light! more light!' plea with which he ended *Anonymous Empire*. 'The practitioners of politics,' he declared, 'have become professionals, and to all intents and purposes they are operating a closed shop. It is time to break it open.'²⁵

Finer now entered on the most productive part of his career, that was to culminate in the massive though unfinished *History of Government*.⁵ The study of military intervention in politics led naturally to his major text, *Comparative Government*.⁴ It was one of his features to be thinking of the next area of research whilst still completing a current project. His interest in the Third World was already there in the late 1950s, and was reflected in his wish to reshape the syllabus for the Comparative Government course at Keele. Indeed, his initial focus was more on Latin America, whose states had been independent for over a hundred years, than Africa, most of which was still under colonial tutelage. To most British political scientists at the time, Britain was a model; it offered standards against which other polities could be assessed, and was for most the essential ingredient of introductory first-year courses in the subject. Increasingly, he came to question this view. 'Storm in Channel! Continent isolated' is a not unfair way of characterising the parochialism of the political science profession in Britain. He led the way (as he so often did) in helping British political scientists, in numbers even fewer than Gideon's army, to divert their Anglocentric gaze to the world beyond the shores of Britain, especially to the newly emerging post-colonial states of the Third World. Britain was the odd man out, not Burma or the Camerons. It was the very virtues of the British political system, the acceptance of tacit rules, the give-and-take of political life, the way in which old forms responded to new realities, which made it politically so idiosyncratic. Britain was not therefore the

²⁴ S. E. Finer, *The Changing British Party System 1945–1979* (Washington DC, 1980).

²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 231.

best pattern to present to first-year undergraduates. If we sought to understand the practice of politics as it was over most of the globe, we needed to look across the water, especially at the new states.

*The Man On Horseback*²⁶ a study of military intervention in politics, grew out of a paper Finer presented to the Political Studies Association. Since no one else seemed to have examined the subject, he, in his own words, felt compelled to do so himself. He modestly averred that it had been written for the general reader, rather than his professional colleagues. He imposed his intellectual yoke lightly on his readers. He had the gift of making the most sophisticated argument seem simple, even obvious, to his public. 'The purpose of art,' declared Oscar Wilde, 'is to reveal art and conceal the artist.' As, with *Anonymous Empire*, contemporary events wrote much of the material for him. Like that book, *Horseback* displayed once again his formidable power to simplify complex phenomena, without compromising scholarly integrity. Once again, his framework for analysis was deceptively lucid. After assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the military, who seized power in so many post-colonial countries after the Second World War, he went on to examine military intervention in terms of such factors as the *disposition* to intervene, and the *opportunity* to intervene.

Horseback did more than set out the conditions of military interference. He talks of the levels of intervention, that is the form which intervention takes; in ascending order, these were influence, blackmail, displacement and supplantment. The level depended very largely on the political culture of the society. Thus, military intervention was not unknown in mature Western societies, or in the next category, countries of developed political culture; here, when it occurred, it took the form of influence, or sometimes blackmail. In countries of low political culture, and even more so in those of minimal political culture, military intervention took the form of displacement, often violent — the ejection from office of a Cabinet or President of whom the armed forces disapproved — or supplantment, the dismissal of the civilian government and the installation of direct military rule.

* * *

²⁶ S. E. Finer, *The Man On Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics* (London, 1962 and rev. ed., 1976 and 2nd rev. ed., Westview Press, Boulder Colo. and London, 1988).

In 1966, Finer left Keele for Manchester, the biggest and most prestigious department of Politics in Britain outside Oxford and London. The six-hundred-page *Comparative Government*,⁴ published in 1970, was the outgrowth of his lectures in Government 1, the first-year introductory course in Government. It reflected his interests in government as a phenomenon outside the mature democracies of Western Europe and North America. It was, however, more than a simple development of the themes of *Horseback*. It fused together several long-standing concerns. Finer, at least from the early Keele years, had sought to sketch out the scope and definition of Politics. *Comparative Government* reflected a yearning to move forward from the simple curriculum of Oxford PPE, or the London B.Sc.Econ., with their selection of the governments of four or five major powers, chosen for the not very good reason that they had always been studied.

Finer loved typologies and imposed his own so as to make sense of the diversity of political life across the world. How do you distinguish one system of government from another? He proposed four dimensions. The first was persuasion—coercion. In some states people tend to obey their rulers because they recognise the legitimacy (or if not, the utility) of government. In others they comply because of fear. At one extreme governments characteristically use persuasion and bargaining; at the other direct physical coercion. In between, however, lies a range of ways of ensuring popular acceptance of government. In some states, traditional oligarchies maintain their rule by manipulation — by exploiting feelings of deference that the population has for its traditional élites; other, more modern states invoke what he calls regimentation. Such states often have a single monopolistic party and seek the loyalty of their peoples by a kind of controlled involvement, often through the single party, without, however, yielding genuine influence to its citizenry.

All states, of course, use some coercion — even the most liberal — and many, which are for the most part highly coercive, may on occasion use techniques of persuasion, and even more, bargaining. What is important is the mix of means employed.

The other three dimensions may be mentioned more briefly. Some allow sub-groups (which might be territorial, or religious, or economic) a lot of autonomy, whilst other states tightly circumscribe the freedom of such sub-groups. Finer calls this the sub-group autonomy—sub-group dependence dimension. His third dimension, order-representativeness, differentiates between those states which put a high value on order and

stability, and those which emphasise representativeness. Lastly, present goals-future goals, distinguishes between states which emphasise future goods (for example, economic independence or the classless society) and those which lay stress on present goods, for example, immediate prosperity.

These dimensions yield a potential sixteen distinct types of state, though in the event, Finer collapsed these into five. Liberal-democracies, such as the United States and Britain, are characterised by persuasion much more than by coercion, reflect sub-group autonomy rather than sub-group dependence, put more value on representativeness than order, and look to the achievement of present, rather than, future goals. The Soviet Union, in contrast, relied little on persuasion and bargaining, and a lot on what Finer calls regimentation, plus a readiness to resort to outright physical coercion. The regime heavily circumscribed the activities of sub-groups, and put great emphasis on the pursuit of future goals — the classless Communist society.

The advantage of such a schema, however, lies less in the way it classifies states such as the UK and the USSR than in the insight it gives us into the nature of the political systems of what were then the other 120 independent states. Liberal-democratic, and totalitarian states, are easy to recognise, but the real interest lies in Finer's three other categories — façade-democracies, quasi-democracies and military regimes — into which most of the 120 fall. Façade-democracies, which are common in Latin America, are marked by the control, behind the façade, of traditional oligarchies; the new quasi-democracies rest, like the totalitarian states, on a mass but heavily controlled and (usually) single party; Tunisia, Mexico and, until the deposition of Nkrumah in 1966, Ghana are examples of this class.

Military regimes were widespread amongst 'the poorer, the newer, and extra-European states.' Military regimes are distinguished by direct, or thinly concealed indirect, military government. Like the façade-democracies, they are common in Latin America, and also in Africa and the Islamic world.

The typology of *Comparative Government* was a remarkable achievement. It was expounded with clarity, with vigour and with authority; it reduced the kaleidoscopic diversity of government to a few broad types, distinguished from each other by simple criteria. The book, focusing as it did on geographic variation, was the forerunner of his most ambitious, and most imaginative, work.

Finer modestly claimed that he wrote his book for the general reader

(like *Horseback*) and his students. Of course, its value went far beyond that of an undergraduate guide. He showed that learning could not merely be fun; a highly sophisticated advancement of the subject could be made intelligible to undergraduates, and needed to employ little in the way of complex vocabulary. Polysyllabic terminologies were tedious and superogatory.

Finer's long essay on the role of the military in European state-building²⁷ was a link (though intellectual and not chronological) between the more specific concerns of *Horseback* and the broader tasks of *Comparative Government*. More than that, it gave him a new perspective, opening to him the prospect of his last major study, which would be at once analytical and historical. The essay, which illuminates the growth of the State in France, England and Prussia, gave full scope to his imaginative eclecticism. He seemed equally at ease in the England of Edgar the Peaceful, and the modern twentieth-century European polity. His *History of Government From the Earliest Times*⁵ shows the debt which he owed, and we owe, to his work for this essay.

Finer saw his *History of Government* as the culmination of his intellectual pilgrimage. He began work on this vast enterprise on retiring from the Gladstone Chair at Oxford. He spent virtually all his eleven years of retirement on this book. By the time of his death in June 1993, he had completed all but two of the thirty-six chapters. Since his death, his widow, Kate Finer, and Jack Hayward, a former colleague at Keele and now Professor of Politics at Oxford, have taken over the manuscript, completed the two unfinished chapters, edited the book and presented it for publication. It is likely to be published in early 1997.

Finer recognised that, for all the light it shed, his *Comparative Government* was time-bound. It was an essentially static analysis. The new venture, the most exciting of his life, would cross both space and time. Until the book is published we have to rely for an understanding of its content on Professor Hayward's brilliantly lucid Finer Memorial Lecture at the University of Keele, given in May 1995, and on Finer's Public Lecture of 1982, 'Perspectives in the World History of Government', later published in *Government and Opposition*.²⁸ He made the development of the State the central theme of his *History*.

²⁷ S. E. Finer 'State- and Nation-Building in Europe: The Role of the Military', in C. Tilly (ed.), *The Formation Of National States In Western Europe* (Princeton, 1975).

²⁸ J. E. S. Hayward, 'Finer's Comparative History of Government', *Keele Papers in Politics*, 1995, and S. E. Finer, 'Perspectives in the World History of Government — A Prolegomenon', *Government and Opposition*, March 1983.

Finer identified four pure types of polity. The Palace type is exemplified, *inter alia*, by Ancient Egypt, and the Roman, Byzantine, and Chinese Empires. The second, and in a sense antithetical type, he calls the Forum. Here, the 'principle of legitimacy resides in the ruled and not the rulers'. Persuading rather than commanding is required in this polity and thus rhetoric becomes a vital political skill. Both the Church polity, and the Nobility polity, are rarely found in their pure form. The first is exemplified by Tibet, from the fifteenth century until the Chinese Communist invasion, and the second by Poland in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In Poland, the monarch was chosen by the nobles and any one of these could veto legislation.

Six further types are generated by hybrids of the four pure types. Two of these are extremely rare leaving four sub-types: Church–Palace, Forum–Nobility, Palace–Nobility, and the paradoxical Palace–Forum type. The Church–Palace type has three variants of which Caesaropapism is the most well-known. The Roman Republic and Venice provide examples of the Forum–Nobility type. The Palace–Nobility type has four sub-types of which the most well-known — the King governing with his council of noblemen — was characteristic of medieval Europe. The Palace–Forum polity is distinguished by autocratic rule, legitimated by popular election or plebiscite. The modern totalitarian state is an important sub-type of this class.

The schema therefore is both imaginative and economical, reducing enormous variation to, in effect eight types, and a number of sub-types. Sammy saw no pre-ordained development, no inevitable broadening out of freedom from precedent to precedent. Some types of polity survived, others passed into the limbo of history. He would not have shared Laski's optimism of the mid-1920s: 'Democratic government is doubtless a final form of political organisation in that men who have once tasted power will not, without conflict, surrender it.'²⁹ On the contrary; ancient Athens, the earliest of the Forum type, had few imitators: ' . . . until the nineteenth century,' says Finer, 'it was Sparta, not Athens, that was the model for the European avant-garde. The harsh fact is that the Greek democratic *poleis* form but a tiny spot, both spatially and temporally, on the five millennia of the world's forms of government.' Just as the Darwinian doctrine of 'survival of the fittest' tells us nothing about the moral status of those species that do survive, or their contribution to the world's ecosystem, so the survival of one type of polity,

²⁹ H. J. Laski, *A Grammar of Politics* (London, 1925), p. 17.

and the extinction of another, tell us nothing about the ethical claims of each. Writing of the long march of history, Finer observed that 'progressive evolution would be a wholly misguided way of conceiving this long and tortuous process.' If we learn nothing else from Finer's *History*, we will at least learn to curb our expectations.

Finer was more than a great teacher and an innovative scholar. He also built up, what for its time, was one of the biggest departments in the United Kingdom. It is necessary to emphasise again the fragmented character of the subject in British universities for most of the 1950s. Politics, however old its lineage, had little presence in Britain. In the mid-1950s the Political Studies Association had barely a hundred members, and some of these were historians or area specialists who took little part in the Association's work. Typically, the Politics teaching complement at a provincial university consisted of two or three members, often located in an Economics or History department, and boasting no independent undergraduate degree. In terms of size as well as prestige, Oxford, LSE and Manchester dominated the profession.

Finer, the student of empires, was foremost among the empire-builders. He discerned the unique opportunities which Keele offered to the ambitious entrepreneur. Few university applicants at this stage opted to read Politics. In some schools, pupils could take British Constitution at O level or A level, but the subject was dominated by the constitutional lawyers. For nearly all departments, of whatever subject, a substantial student population was, and remains, a pre-condition of growth. What Keele did was to offer him the opportunity to attract students, in large numbers, to read Politics at either principal or subsidiary level. The Foundation Year, one of Keele's novel features, gave him his chance. The centre-piece of the Foundation Year was a lecture course to which all departments contributed, and attendance at which was compulsory for all first-year students. He ensured that he himself filled each slot allotted to the Political Institutions department. Such a large audience saw Finer, never backward as a performer, at his best. Lecturing to the Foundation Year gave him his 'fix', and students an experience. His enthusiasm, his encyclopaedic knowledge, his inexhaustible humour, guaranteed a receptive audience. So, every June, when students came to make their choices for principal and subsidiary subjects, forty or so students would enrol for Principal 1 Politics the

following October, and a similar number would opt for the Subsidiary course.

Keele early adopted a formula which related the teaching staff entitlement, above a certain threshold, to student enrolments. The more students a department could attract, the more staff it could appoint. Finer seems to have been successful in his choice of colleagues. Of the six Politics specialists he recruited between 1954 and 1963, four went on to hold chairs of Politics in Britain and one became Fellow of an Oxford research college. By 1962, Keele was the fourth biggest department of Politics in the country. Finer was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1982.

It would have been unfair of providence to distribute so many gifts to Finer without at least a few gaps or weaknesses. Finer was enormously learned, but his grasp of detail, sometimes including important detail, could be defective. He sometimes chafed at the restraints of precision. He was a broad-brush man. He was rather like a tank general, breaking through the enemy lines, racing ahead to the next objective, and leaving pockets of resistance far in his rear, to be mopped up at leisure. 'Go to his lectures, but don't take any notes', was the advice some Oxford tutors gave their students, during his first spell at Oxford.

Moreover, there were certain developments in the subject with which Finer was never at ease. He can be pardoned for his dislike of the grosser manifestations of American behaviouralism. More surprisingly, he never seems to have been at home with the studies of electoral behaviour which burgeoned in the last twenty-five years of his life. He certainly cited their findings but his mind never really accommodated itself to the new genre. In spite of his familiarity with American political science he seemed, paradoxically for the biographer of Chadwick, untouched by the growing interest there in personality and politics; thus, the second edition of *Horseback* discusses the socialisation and recruitment of the military, but never mentions Norman Dixon's seminal work *On The Psychology of Military Incompetence*.³⁰

In Finer, the iconoclast and the enthusiast sometimes strove for mastery. He began as a man of the Left and apparently voted Labour up to, and including, the election of 1955. Just as he changed his mind

³⁰ N. Dixon, *On The Psychology of Military Incompetence* (London, 1976).

on intellectual issues, so he altered his political opinions. He would relate that change to some moment of truth (not always the same moment), when the limitations of his past political creed became apparent to him. Sometimes Suez in 1956 was presented as being that moment, for he identified passionately with the new state of Israel. There was a story that he openly burned the *Manchester Guardian* at the time but this was probably one of those legends that Finer recounted against himself. As with most great communicators, Sammy was not a man to forego the pleasures of a good story. His conversion to Conservatism, however, at its furthest, was never wholly secure. During the 1970s, when he embraced proportional representation, he was even-handed in his strictures against the two main parties. As we have seen, he became highly critical of the working of British government. He stayed an iconoclast throughout his career, never wholly turning his back on his early radicalism.

In some, the ordinary human qualities seem to be exalted to a higher level. Sammy never did anything by halves. He was sometimes provocative, but always provocatively exciting; in style both of dress and speech, often flamboyant, but flamboyantly engaging; in voicing opinion, sometimes outrageous, but outrageously stimulating. He was passionate in his beliefs, but never closed-mindedly so; he was vehement in his enmities, but generous in reconciliation. He was scornful in opposition, but ardent in loyalty; gargantuan in his industry, and intense in his enthusiasms.

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Note. I am grateful to Rod Hague and Rod Rhodes for their helpful comments about aspects of Professor Finer's work. I also owe special thanks to Dennis Kavanagh for sending me his chapter *The Fusion of History and Politics: The Case of S. E. Finer* in Hans Daalder's edited volume *The Autobiography of Comparative European Politics* (London, 1996). I have also profited from his address at the commemoration of Sammy Finer's life and work held at All Souls College, Oxford, on 7 May 1994. Similarly, I must thank Jack Hayward for sending me the written version of the Finer Memorial Lecture that he gave at the University of Keele on 10 May 1995 which gives a graphic account of Professor Finer's *History of Government from the Earliest Times*. Not least, I must thank him for his constant prodding of me to write this memoir.

Bibliographic Note

A Bibliography of S. E. Finer's principal publications appeared in 1984 in *Comparative Government and Politics, Essays in Honour of S. E. Finer*, ed. Dennis Kavanagh and Gillian Peele (Boulder, Colo.), pp. 16–19. One entry should be corrected, *Adversary Politics and Electoral Reform* was edited by Finer, not jointly authored.

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